

Health and Safety Policy (including Lone Working)

The following policy was agreed at the Parochial Church Council (PCC) meeting held on 23 October 2024.

Introduction

As a church, we understand that we owe a duty of care to ensure the safety of those who visit or use our church or churchyard. We are aware that we have to meet the requirements of health and safety law as described at www.hse.gov.uk. However, as a small church with no employees and a comparatively low-risk environment, we are not required to have a formal written policy. This document therefore provides an outline of how we manage health and safety and the safety checks that we make. It should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy, which addresses our approach to the broader aspects of maintaining a safe environment and culture within our church.

General Statement of Policy

Our policy is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that our activities are carried out safely and do not pose a risk to the health of our volunteers, congregation, visitors and others who may use the church or churchyard. This will be in accordance with good practice and any relevant statutory provisions where they apply.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) accepts its overall responsibility for this. We will ensure that adequate resources are made available to achieve this objective, and that any decisions we make will have due regard for it.

We will appoint a member of the PCC to have specific responsibility for this policy and its implementation. We will keep health and safety matters as a standing agenda item on our regular PCC meetings to enable us to monitor the effectiveness of the policy, amending it where we believe it is no longer valid.

It is the duty of each employee and volunteer to exercise personal responsibility for their own safety and that of others, including when they are working alone on our premises or on church business. This policy will be brought to their attention. We will endeavour to ensure that everyone involved with the church plays his or her part in its implementation.

Further detail about our organisation and arrangements for managing health and safety is set out in this document. A copy of it will be kept in the church porch and on the church website and made available to others on request.

Agreed at the PCC meeting held on 23 October 2024

Organisation and Responsibilities

The member of the PCC with overall responsibility for implementing our policy is:

Roger Derbyshire – Vice Chair of the PCC

They will ensure that:

- The standards set out in this policy are implemented and maintained
- Where necessary, specialist health and safety assistance is obtained
- Any hazards reported to them are rectified in a timely manner
- Only competent persons carry out repairs, modifications, inspections and tests
- Any accidents are investigated, recorded and reported if necessary
- Relevant health and safety documents and records are retained
- They keep up to date on health and safety matters relevant to the church
- Set a personal example on matters of health and safety.

The Churchwarden has day-to-day responsibility for implementing our policy. They will ensure that:

- All volunteers are aware of their health and safety responsibilities
- Adequate precautions are taken as set out in this policy and related risk assessments
- Adequate information and training are provided for those that need it
- Any hazards or complaints are investigated and dealt with as soon as possible
- Where defects cannot be corrected immediately, interim steps are taken to prevent danger
- All accidents are reported in-line with the requirements of this policy
- Advice is sought where clarification is necessary on the implementation of this policy
- Set a personal example on matters of health and safety.

All volunteers have a responsibility to cooperate in the implementation of this policy and to take reasonable care of themselves and others while on church business or premises. They will ensure that they:

- Read this policy and understand what is required of them
- Complete their work taking any necessary precautions to protect themselves and others
- Comply with any safety rules, operating instructions and other working procedures
- Report any hazard, defect or damage, so that this might be dealt with
- Warn any new volunteers of known hazards
- Attend any training required to enable them to carry out their duties safely
- Do not undertake any repair or modification unless they are competent to do so
- Report any accident
- Do not misuse anything provided in the interests of health and safety.

General Arrangements

Competent Assistance

Where necessary, we will appoint someone who is competent to assist us in meeting our health and safety obligations.

Risk Assessment

We will complete risk assessments to identify what we need to do to comply with health and safety law. We will record our findings, implementing any necessary precautions. We will review and revise these where we suspect that they are no longer valid. Often a risk assessment will take the form of a general discussion at a PCC meeting about any risks identified in a planned event and the findings minuted.

Information and Training

We will provide any necessary information and training for our volunteers in a timely manner, keeping a record of what is provided. We will also give relevant information to contractors and self-employed people who may need this to complete their work safely.

First Aid

We will provide adequate first aid facilities including – as a minimum – a suitably stocked first aid box and a person who will take charge of the first aid arrangements. We will also provide relevant information for volunteers.

- *Our first aid box is located in the vestry.*
- *Our person in charge of first aid arrangements is Marian Shaw*

Accident Reporting

We will keep an accident book and record details therein. We will keep records of certain accidents to volunteers and members of the public in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

- *Our Accident Book is kept in the vestry*

Monitoring

We will make periodic checks to ensure that our precautions remain effective and adequate. We will also ensure that any lifting, work or electrical equipment and church utilities are inspected as necessary to ensure that they remain safe. We will keep records of the checks we make.

Contractors

If we employ contractors, we will ensure that they have their own health & safety policy and Public and Employers Liability insurance.

Record Keeping

Electronic copies of our Health and Safety Risk Assessments, records and other documents are kept in our Google Account (sthelensberrick@gmail.com).

Specific Arrangements

Asbestos

We are not aware of the presence of asbestos in our building given its age and construction from materials such as stone, bricks, solid wood timbers, wooden doors, glass. We will advise any building contractors of these views.

Bell Ringing

We will ensure that adequate precautions are in place to protect bellringers and others who may enter the ringing room and bell chamber. This will include the notification of safety procedures to visiting bellringers.

Church Buildings

We will ensure that the fabric of our buildings is regularly inspected to make sure it is safe. Defects will be repaired as soon as is practicable bearing in mind that a faculty may be required. Where necessary, temporary measures will be taken to prevent danger until permanent repairs can be made.

Churchyard

We will ensure that boundary walls and gates are kept in a state of repair that does not cause a safety risk. We will inspect trees and have any necessary work carried out to make them safe. Headstones, tombs and monuments will be checked regularly to ensure they are safe.

Construction Work

Where maintenance, refurbishment and restoration work is planned for our church, we will identify what we need to do to ensure the safety of all those concerned before work starts. We will also determine if we have any responsibilities under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations and comply with these if necessary.

Electricity

We will ensure that any electrical system, fixed machine and portable appliance is maintained so as to prevent danger. Any defective equipment will not be used until it is repaired or replaced. We will keep records of the checks made where appropriate.

Events

Where we intend to hold large or unusual concerts, services and fundraising events, we will identify any additional precautions that are necessary and implement these.

Fire

We will complete a specific risk assessment to identify what steps are necessary to prevent, detect and take in the event of a fire. We will record our findings, implementing any necessary precautions. We will review and revise these where we suspect that they are no longer valid.

Hazardous Substances

We only use domestic cleaning or horticultural products and petrol. We will ensure that these are stored, used and disposed of in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions, taking any necessary precautions that are specified.

Manual Handling

We will avoid the need for lifting or carrying heavy objects as far as is possible. Where this is not practical, we will make use of lifting aids (such as trolleys) or other precautions, including team lifting.

Slips and Trips

We will implement suitable precautions to prevent slips or trips, taking account of any difficulty the frail, elderly or disabled may have in negotiating access. We will make periodic checks to ensure that floors, coverings, steps and pathways remain in good condition, free from obstruction and that any precautions (such as handrails or lighting) remain adequate. We will correct any defects identified, keeping records of the checks we make. We will have arrangements in place to manage pathways in winter weather.

Work Equipment

Any work equipment (including any hand tools) we provide will be suitable, in good condition and properly maintained. Where necessary, some equipment (such as ladders) will be regularly checked to make sure they are safe. We will keep records of any checks we make.

Working Alone

We will identify circumstances where our employees and volunteers work alone, and implement suitable precautions to ensure their safety. See Annex 1 "Lone Working".

Working at Height

Where possible, we will try to avoid the need for work at height. Where this is not practicable, we will ensure that any work is properly planned to identify suitable precautions. We will make sure that these are implemented, including the provision of any training and checks to ensure the safety of any equipment used.

Annex 1: Lone Working

Principles

It is recognised that lone working is an everyday practice for church volunteers, and it is therefore important that the additional risks that arise from this are fully understood, in order that they can go about their work in relative safety.

All volunteers should avoid working alone if it is not necessary, however, if this is not feasible, they should be aware of the importance of personal safety, and take all reasonable precautions to safeguard themselves from harm, as they would in any other circumstances.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is responsible for ensuring that all lone working activities within the church are formally identified, and appropriate risk assessments are undertaken in order to identify and reduce the risks which lone working presents. In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk, issues such as the place and nature of the task or activity, security, and any risk of violence should be considered, alongside any other factors appropriate to the circumstances, such as the lone worker's health and fitness, age and gender.

The perception of risk can be seen differently by each individual, and, therefore, it is important that all lone workers receive relevant information about the identified risks within their role, in order that they are equipped to recognise these, and are enabled to take responsibility for their own safety and security.

The PCC will ensure that adequate insurance is in place to cover all lone working activities which have been formally identified by a risk assessment.

Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker, consideration will be given by the PCC to undertake other arrangements to complete the task or activity, such as ensuring individuals work in pairs.

Procedure

It is important not to over-emphasise the risks of lone working, and create an unnecessary fear amongst volunteers that is disproportionate to the reality of the risks faced. However, lone workers do face increased risks because they do not have the immediate support of colleagues, or others, if an incident occurs, and particularly if they are working in an isolated or rural location.

Whilst the PCC has a responsibility to ensure their lone workers' health, safety and welfare, there are also a number of things individuals can do to take reasonable care of themselves:

- Lone workers should never put themselves at risk. If a situation arises that they are unfamiliar with, or in which they feel unsafe, they should withdraw and seek further advice or assistance.

- Volunteers should conduct their own risk assessment on the occasions when they are working alone, which will help them to decide how safe a situation is and what action should be taken to avoid danger.
- Lone workers should be aware of how to raise the alarm if necessary, and ensure they have a means of communicating with others in the event a problem arises.
- Lone workers should inform a partner, friend or colleague of their whereabouts, plans and anticipated time of return, so that the alarm can be raised if they do not return in a timely manner.
- If approached by a visitor to the church or churchyard, lone workers should be aware of themselves, their behaviour and the signals they may be giving, and to think about their body language, tone of voice and the choice of words they use with others that could be taken as confrontational.